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Scottish Christian Social Union.

Report re Elberfeld system and labour colonies...

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[1905]

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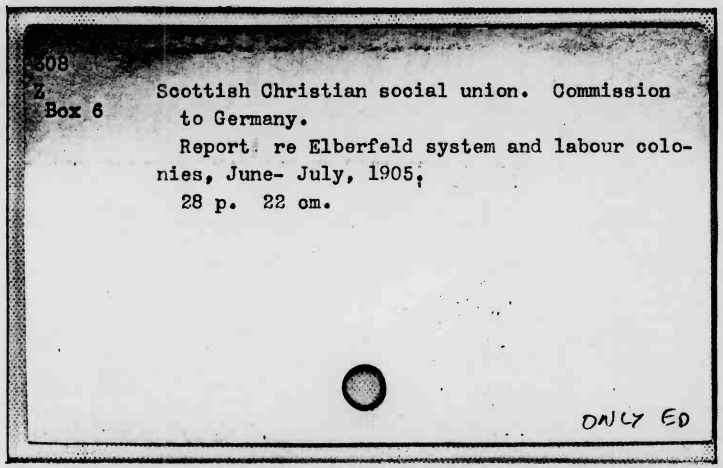

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· REPORT ·

OF THE

Scottish Christian Social Union Commission

to Germany

re

ELBERFELD SYSTEM AND LABOUR COLONIES.

JUNE-JULY 1905.

PREFATORY NOTE.

THE Commission to Germany enquired into—

(1) The Elberfeld System;
(2) Labour Colonies;
(3) Employers and Employees (Essen);
(4) The Social Life of the German People;
(5) Treatment of Epileptics (Bethel); and
(6) The Training of Social Workers—the Diaconate in Germany.

As, however, the first two subjects are complementary, and as they deal with a matter of pressing civic interest, it was thought desirable to submit those portions of the Report at once. This has now been done at a meeting of the Union held in the Christian Institute, Glasgow, on 1st November, 1905, when on the motion of Dr. M'Adam Muir, seconded by Professor Reid, it was unanimously agreed to print and circulate the Report.

On the motion of Sir Samuel Chisholm, LL.D., seconded by William Graham, Esq., C.A., it was further unanimously agreed to arrange for a public meeting of citizens to consider what steps might be taken to give effect to the recommendations of the Report.

DAVID WATSON,
Chairman of National Executive.

THOMAS MARTIN, D.D.,
Convener of Social Centres Committee.

ANDREW MILLER,
Convener of Parliamentary Bills Committee.

D. A. CAMERON REID,
Convener of Magazine Committee.

ISAAC LOW,
President of Townhead Social Institute.

C. ROLLAND RAMSAY,
Hon. Secretary of the Union.

11 March 1915 MH

INTRODUCTION.

FOR all interested in social economics few countries have more to teach than Germany. Owing to the special conditions which obtain in that country one can often see there in practical operation what is to be found elsewhere only in theory. As a result we already possess such valuable publications as "The Report to the Board of Trade on Agencies and Methods for dealing with the Unemployed" by Mr. D. F. Schloss, and the Parliamentary Blue Book on Elberfeld Poor Law and German Workmen's Colonies.

The excellent Reports by Glasgow's Inspector of Poor, Mr. J. R. Motion, have also conveyed to the Public much valuable information; while the wide circulation of Miss Julie Sutter's "Colony of Mercy" and "Britain's Next Campaign" has done much to awaken the social conscience of the average citizen.

With a view to stimulating public opinion on such important matters as poor law administration and other cognate subjects, the Scottish Christian Social Union recently commissioned several of its members to visit Elberfeld, Bielefeld, Wilhelmsdorf, Cologne, Düsseldorf, and Essen. In presenting their Report your Commissioners take this opportunity of gratefully acknowledging the credentials received from the Hon. the Lord Provost of Glasgow, the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, and the reference from the General Assembly of the United Free Church of Scotland, as well as letters of introduction from others occupying positions of influence, whereby their enquiries were greatly facilitated.

Among the many to whom your Commissioners are specially indebted for valuable information and generous hospitality are—The Oberbürgermeister and Staff in each town visited, Pastor von Bodelschwingh, Jr., Pastor Layer, Pastor Kuhlo (Bethel), Dr. Feldmann (Wilhelmsdorf), Herr Schwanenberg, Herr Elsass, Dr. Nagel (Elberfeld), Herr Blank, Pastor Disselhoff (Kaiserswerth), Dr. Mathias. Herr Stoffers, Herr Marx (Düsseldorf), Herr Fritz Homann and Dr. Lind (Essen). Not only did the two last named gentlemen, as representatives of Krupp's, render every possible assistance and generously entertain the Commission, but since then have sent copies of the firm's publications to the offices of the Union (102 Bath Street), where they are now available for reference.

The Report is issued in the hope that the facts therein stated may serve as a basis of conference among all interested in poor law administration in order that steps may be taken to secure such reforms as may be found practicable and expedient.

A brief summary of the comparative observations and suggestions unanimously agreed to by the Commissioners will be found on pages 16 and 26 of the Report.

I.—The Elberfeld System.

THE HOME OF THE SYSTEM.

FOR many years Elberfeld has been known to the man of business as one of the most prosperous towns in Rhenish Prussia. Surrounded by finely wooded heights, on the slopes of which are many magnificent mansions, the industrial portion of the town lies in a fertile valley, through which the Wupper flows into the Rhine.

The industries of the town are varied, including silk and other manufactures, dye and chemical works, etc. For the tourist the chief attraction is the Great Avenue, and the Schwebebahn (Hanging Railway), one of the greatest feats of engineering skill, erected at a cost of £650,000.

Even the casual observer is struck with the prosperous air of this busy commercial centre, now numbering its inhabitants at 164,000. Slums have to be sought for, and when found are such as the visitor, from Glasgow at least, would fail to recognise by that name. It was not always so. At one time the poverty was so appalling that a Town Councillor of the day—Daniel von der Heydt—resolved to secure the co-operation of his fellow-townsmen in some systematic visitation of the poor.

BIRTH OF THE SYSTEM.

THE idea was first suggested to him by a passage in Exodus, "Thou shalt provide out of all the people able men to be rulers over thousands, rulers over hundreds, rulers over fifties, rulers over tens."

This was the birth hour of the Elberfeld System. The principle is that every person above the poverty line shall be obliged systematically to care for his less fortunate fellows.

At first voluntary effort alone was tried, but it was found that more was required to make the system effective, and thus it has now long been established on a civic basis, with the law at its back.

NATURE OF THE SYSTEM.

In Elberfeld the central board is the **Städtische Armenverwaltung** (the town poor administration). The Convener or President is the Oberbürgermeister (Lord Provost), or a member of the Town Council, or of the Verwaltung, chosen by the Town Council. The President holds office for six years. Again and again your Commissioners were assured of the absolute importance of securing the right man as President. **On him depends to a very large extent the success of the scheme.** The system in Elberfeld has now reached a high stage of development, and great credit is due to the present occupant of the presidential chair, Herr Aders, who indeed has seen his semi-jubilee, and the chief secretary, Herr Schwanenberg, with whom your Commissioners had a protracted interview.

CONSTITUTION OF THE VERWALTUNG.

In addition to the President, the Verwaltung consists of eight members, four of whom are Town Councillors, and four co-opted citizens, all of whom, it should be specially noted, are appointed by the Town Council for three years' service. Members retire by rotation, but are eligible for re-election.

ADMINISTRATION.

For administrative purposes the town is divided into Quartiere (sections), each section containing so many houses. Every fourteen sections form a Bezirk (district). Each section is under the charge of a Pfleger (Almoner); while every district is presided over by a Bezirks Vorsteher (District Superintendent). The Almoners and Superintendents are nominated

by the Verwaltung, and confirmed in their offices by the Town Council. With the exception of the officials in the Central Office, the workers are all honorary, and are formally installed by the President, when they make a solemn declaration that they will conscientiously perform the duties of their office.

DUTIES OF THE ALMONER.

All applications for relief are made to the Almoner of the district in which the applicant resides. It is the duty of the Almoner, who almost invariably resides in the district, to visit the house of the applicant and to carefully enquire into all the circumstances of the case. If the case is urgent provisional relief is granted, but this only to a small extent, and generally after consultation with the superintendent of the district. The Almoner is bound to visit his cases at least once a fortnight. He has generally two such cases and seldom more than four. It is his duty to obtain a return of the applicant's earnings from his **employers** on a Dienstbuch (Service-book), and to enter every detail on a Abhörbogen (Form). On this form are entered every fortnight all changes in the applicant's family circumstances, all changes in income, and every other particular bearing on the question of the amount of relief to be allowed. Your Commissioners found that while in no way interfering with church or private charity, **all the known sources of income** are reckoned in fixing the amount of relief to be given.

The following is the recognised standard for the necessaries of life in respect of food, clothing, house, etc.:—

3/0	a week	for the head of a family.
2/6	„	for a wife living with her husband.
3/0	„	for a child of 14 and over if habitually employed.
2/2½	„	„ „ not habitually wage-earning.
2/0	„	for a child of 10—14.
1/7	„	for a child of 5—10.
1/4½	„	for a child of 1—5.
1/0	„	for an infant under one year.

[There is a special grant for milk for an infant over and above this standard to the extent upon occasion of 3/- a week.]

A medical certificate as to capacity for work is attached to the above form. The forms are printed on large cards, carefully indexed. A fresh form must be made for each case every two years, and the last card is attached to the new one, **so that for each case there is a complete record of every detail in the family history for four years.**

DISTRICT COMMITTEES.

ONCE a fortnight the fourteen Almoners, under the chairmanship of the District Superintendent, meet to decide cases of relief. At such meetings the quorum is eight. The Chairman has a vote, and casting vote, and the right to appeal to the Central Board. **No relief is given for more than fourteen days, so that each case must come up for review at every meeting of the District Committee.** All the District Meetings are held on the same day, and on the following morning the minute books from the various districts are conveyed to the Central Office, where **the President examines into every case in which relief has been granted.**

DUTIES OF THE VERWALTUNG OR CENTRAL BOARD.

THIS Board meets once a fortnight also, when the relief list of one or more of the districts is carefully revised.

During the revision all the District Superintendents are supposed to be present, and the Almoners of the district under revision are always present. The relief cards of each Almoner are then read out, and the President (who prior to the meeting has gone carefully into each case) interrogates the Almoner. A vote is then taken as to whether the relief order should be confirmed or remitted to the district meeting. The District Superintendents present take part in the discussion, and vote on revision cases along with the members of the Central Board. It is expected that in addition to having all the facts about the applicant, the Almoner has made thorough investigation as to the circumstances of those legally bound to render support, in order that the necessary steps may be taken

to have the contributions exacted. These contributions are often as low as a penny per week, and are collected by the Central Office.

After the revision is made, the District Superintendents receive the money which it is estimated will be required in their districts during the next fortnight. The Board then proceeds to its other business, such as receiving Reports from the Poorhouse, Reformatories, and the Asylum; while consideration is also made of the work of the

FRAUEN VEREIN (LADIES' ASSOCIATION).

THIS Association deals with special cases where charitable relief in kind is essential, and with such cases as can otherwise be best dealt with by women.

Of late the Ladies' Association has been extending its operations, and in two of the forty districts the Almoners are women. In other towns where the Elberfeld System has been adopted your Commissioners found an increasing readiness to use the services of women in this connection, by which shall not be understood that women workers, however efficient, are intended to relieve male citizens of their responsibilities.

In addition to the duties already specified, the Central Board is expected to—(1) Investigate the condition of the poorer classes; enquire into the sources of their poverty; and take such measures as may be expedient not only to relieve, but to **prevent** it, or to move the municipality to do so. (2) Submit the estimates of expenditure to the Town Council. (3) Prepare an Annual Report.

THE STATUTORY BASIS OF THE SYSTEM.

THE statutory basis of the system is the Paupers' Settlement Act of 1870, along with the supplementary Acts of the Imperial Diet. By these Acts it is compulsory on every community to establish a public system of poor relief. Supplementary Law (1871), sec. 1., provides that **every destitute German** is to be relieved by his Union with the absolute necessaries of life, help in sickness, and, in the event of death, shall receive a suitable funeral.

THE ABLE-BODIED OUT-OF-WORK.

THIS class will come in for detailed treatment under Chapter II.—on Labour Colonies—but here it may be said that in Elberfeld, through the thoroughness of the system of investigation, and the method of relief, comparatively little trouble has been experienced in dealing with the able-bodied. By German Law every worker, male or female, from 16 years upwards, and whose annual income is under £100 (thus including clerks, etc., etc.), is obliged to join the National Insurance, which covers disablement by accident or sickness and provides against old age.

Your Commissioners found that the wage for a skilled workman, such as an engineer, ranged from 25/- to 40/-, and for an unskilled labourer, 18/- to 20/-. The general principle acted on is that the poor shall earn as much as they can, and that any shortage from the standard of subsistence shall be made good out of the rates. It may be remarked that unless the position is carefully safeguarded by the Almoner, there is an obvious danger of this practice creating an undesirable form of competition with fellow-workers, with a consequent fall in the rate of wages. (See page 14.)

UNSATISFACTORY CASES.

THERE are always cases not belonging to the class of the deserving, yet not sufficiently aggravated for police supervision, in which poverty is traceable to intemperance or thriftlessness. Such cases receive only the minimum of relief, while the Almoners very specially seek to exercise a moral influence on those concerned, and that often with very gratifying results. Among the unsatisfactory must be classed desertion cases, of which in one year there were as many as ten per cent. of the total. The system presents a temptation in this direction which could be best checkmated by the custom observed in this country of declining to relieve the deserted wife, except with an order to the poorhouse, thereby preventing all collusion.

COST OF THE SYSTEM.

THE cost of relief of the poor in Elberfeld for the last year

was £37,200, of which rather less than half was directly supplied by the city's exchequer. The rest was supplied by—

(*a*) Interest on Endowments.
(*b*) Reserve Fund of Savings Bank.
(*c*) Police Fines.
(*d*) Profits of Official Publications.
(*e*) Money received from Relations of Paupers.
(*f*) Contributions from Municipal Pawn Shops.
(*g*) Other minor sources of income.

This is all-told—asylums, hospitals, orphan work, etc The cost of Poor Relief at Elberfeld is always under 2/- per head of the population, which is considerably less than the cost of British Poor Relief. Moreover, the work of relief is fully done—the whole ground being covered.

RESULTS OF THE SYSTEM.

(1) As a result of the system the cost of pauperism has been greatly reduced.

(2) The standard of relief has been considerably raised.

(3) The moral influence of the Almoner tends to remove the causes of poverty, and is an incentive to self-respect and independence whereby the standard of comfort is raised.

(4) It is a *preventive system.* The poor are helped at the first downward step, whereas the British Poor Law requires a man to be absolutely destitute (in Scotland disabled besides) before it grants an allowance.

It is often urged that the Elberfeld System cannot be judged or even understood unless it is taken in conjunction with the social conditions that prevail in Germany; that it is an outgrowth of the national life and sentiment, depending for its success on social habits and legal enactments to which Scotland offers no parallel. If it be so, what one country has done another can do (in its own way), and it behoves Britain not to be found behind Germany or any other nation in effective provision for its poor. *Even* Miss Sutter, who is

the most ardent exponent of the Elberfeld System in our midst, asks in her book, not for an *adopting*, but an *adapting*; indeed, as far as we are concerned, she asks for a *Glasgow* System, only that it be "equally thorough, equally effective." What is now required is a *strong man to take the lead*, and surely such a man should be easily found in the city of Chalmers.

In the first place it is to be remembered that drunkenness is not so portentous a fact in Germany as it is with us. Drunkenness undoubtedly there is—making the establishment of Inebriate Homes a necessity—but it does not everywhere stare you in the face, and it is not so primary a factor in producing destitution. The German workman, as a rule, drinks his light lager beer, but does not get drunk. Indeed, the tendency to non-alcoholic beverages is increasing.

In the next place the German has not the same exaggerated idea of personal liberty that prevails in our country. That is why socialistic ideals have so powerful an attraction for him. Whether it be owing to the compulsory military system which lays a deep foundation of respect for discipline in the German character, or to the general trend of the national development, which has always been under a semi-autocratic government, it would be difficult to determine, but the German, as a rule, inclines to do what a beneficent legislature assures him, under pains and penalties, it is his duty to do. He has learned too that individualism (and for its own gain) must yield to solidarity.

Bearing these two facts in mind, it will be noted that the German Municipal Poor Law Administration is unhampered by certain disturbing factors that constitute the difficulty of our problem.

To begin with, the poverty caused by vice, drunkenness, ingrained laziness, is swept off the field. How this is done in detail a consideration of our report on Farm Colonies will make clear. Suffice it to recapitulate that the man who with us drinks his family into destitution and misery is not allowed to do so in Germany. He is deprived of his civil rights and

placed where he can do no harm either to himself or to any one else. The Inebriate Home starts therefore with the initial advantage that in the dim background the "blessed word compulsion" can be descried.

The Elberfeld System requires, in a town of 164,000, about 560 Almoners to do civic work of a somewhat arduous nature in which the Kudos to be gained is slight. The glory of the Elberfeld System is in its army of unpaid "Cherishers of the Poor." Yes, but suppose a man who is appointed to this office were to say, as so many say with us when asked to undertake similar duties, "I appreciate the honour that is conferred upon me in being selected for this honourable post, but I am very busy. To do this work faithfully requires time. You should go to someone who has greater leisure than I have. I must really insist on being excused." In such a case he is met with the answer, "The first duty of every citizen is to the State, which he must serve with his life, if need be. If you refuse an honourable civic duty like this, then remember there *is* provision on the Statute Book under which we could ask you to forego your municipal vote, besides raising your local taxes by an eighth to a fourth. Indeed, by your own showing you might be considered unworthy to fill *any* office to which a distinction is attached." Your Commissioners were careful to enquire whether this provision had ever been enforced. So far as could be learned it had not. They were told that the Elberfeld System had been in full working order for twenty years previous to that Statute, never lacking the willing service of the citizens, the law thus simply serving the purpose of *fixing public opinion*. Only once in all these years, *i.e.* since 1871, either at Elberfeld or elsewhere, a man had been found to demur—this surely being the exception proving the rule. "The office of an Almoner is an honourable one," we were told, "and our men always willingly accept it."

The foregoing considerations will explain some things in the system which would otherwise be perplexing to those who are only familiar with our own legal and charitable agencies. It is to be noted that the allowances are on a fairly liberal scale, and that the earnings of a family unable to provide for

itself are subsidised out of the rates, *i.e.*, the urban taxes, there being no special poor-rate. This, of course, is clean against first principles in our economics of charity. Looking at the standard on page 7 of the Report, it will be seen that the allowance for a man, his wife, and five children ranging from 5 months to 15 years of age, would be 14/6 a week. Suppose the eldest (a girl) were earning 4/-, and the man, presumably disabled for permanent employment, were earning by occasional light jobs 6/- a week, 4/6 would come out of the rates to supplement the family income. Yet if they did not earn even that much, any deficiency would be supplemented for a fortnight. Here is the old English Poor Law, the classic instance of the deplorable results of a charity, divorced from economic laws. Under this system, we are told, England was brought to the verge of ruin, and yet in Germany *no one objects to it*, and *no evil results from it.* The question was pressed, not only in Elberfeld, but in Düsseldorf and Cologne, Does not this system tend to lower the labouring wage? Does it not make those who are in receipt of relief less active in seeking to improve their position? The answer was always, No. The economic difficulty that presses in Scotland has never even arisen in Germany. To supplement the wages of those whose earnings are under a living standard appeared to the authorities only natural and right. No doubt this is because of the strict supervision exercised by the Almoners, and the fortnightly revision of the allowance, while all the time there is the element of compulsion in the background for those who are not "doing their diligence" to secure work that will remove them from the paupers' roll. The fact, however, that our "economic laws" are *not inevitable* is to be carefully noted.

Then again your Commissioners were careful to make enquiries regarding the problem that exercises the Charity Organisation Society—the evils of indiscriminate charity. From the Report it will be seen that the Verwaltung not only administers the rates, but also all charitable endowments (springing from legacies, donations, etc.) for behoof of the poor. There is therefore in this respect no overlapping. But

when enquiry was made as to Church and private charities your Commissioners were universally told that the Administration take no account of these, the impression being that in making up the returns of income, money coming from these sources was never reckoned or even asked about. They seemed very much amused at the idea that an Almoner should be prevented from giving as much as he chose from his own pocket. It had never occurred to them that there was any necessity for even trying to exercise control over private charity. The problem of the Charity Organisation Society does not, therefore, seem to press in Germany.

Probably it does not exist, the actual fact of the case no doubt being that the Elberfeld System has exercised a wide **educative influence** on all classes. If the system, with all its ramifications, be thoroughly worked, **there cannot be any deserving poor who are overlooked,** and the man or woman who approaches the generous hearted with a long and pitiful story can at once be assigned to his or her proper quarter. Private charity is not likely to reach hurtful dimensions where serious cases of hardship are known to be impossible, and where the slightest signs of demoralization are carefully noted by a rigorous inspection that has everywhere the law at its back.

Indeed, the further your Commissioners probed their investigations, the more were they impressed with the fact that Germany aims at being an organised community with a logical thoroughness to which we are strangers. To every man, woman and child there would seem a definite place and function assigned, and while, in certain directions and within certain limits, there is for all the utmost liberty (there is, for example, ample religious toleration), yet there would appear to be certain restrictions of personal freedom foreign to the British, but quite plausible to the German mind.

If, supposing, with our different ideas and traditions, it were indeed impossible to transplant into this country these German institutions, there yet remains the question to be discussed as to how far the system might be applicable to Scotland under our present conditions.

RECOMMENDATIONS.

IN view of all the facts it is necessary to distinguish between what would be desirable should the Royal Commission, now appointed, decide to recast the Poor Law Administration, and what is practicable under existing circumstances? In the event of the former, your Commissioners are unanimously of opinion that the Poor Law should rest on **a civic basis,** with rating power, in which case the Parish Council would be practically a committee of the Town Council. The committee would consist of a certain number of Town Councillors with a certain number of co-opted members selected on the ground of expert knowledge. Under this committee would be district committees covering the whole city on the plan of the Elberfeld System.

What is at once practicable?

Regarding the latter alternative it is possible at once to organise Ward Committees, to be presided over by the Parish Councillors of the respective Wards, which would receive all applications for relief, transmitting where necessary to the Parish Council, and dealing with those debarred from the Council by statute.

The nuclei of many such committees already exist in the excellent district committees of the Charity Organisation Society and kindred societies. Such committees could be sufficiently enlarged to permit of each member exercising personal supervision over, say three families, and reporting periodically.

ADVANTAGES OF SUCH A SYSTEM.

1. The Parish Council would be in close touch with the entire city.

2. Full and accurate knowledge of each case would be at once available.

3. The district committees would provide a convenient medium between the Parish Council and all applicants.

4. There would be brought into the field of social service a great army of suitable workers, thus fostering and enriching the spirit of citizenship.

THE PRIME MINISTER ON THE POSITION.

SPEAKING in the House of Commons on 3rd August, the Prime Minister said—"I have to say on behalf of His Majesty's Government that we are of opinion that the time has now come when a full enquiry into the Poor Law ought to be undertaken. There has been no such enquiry since the thirties, which resulted in the passing of the Poor Law Act, and we think that the time has now come when a survey of the subject under the new conditions in connection with modern requirements ought to be made. We are anxious to survey everything that appertains to the dealing with the problem of the poor, whether by their own fault or by temporary lack of employment. We are also anxious to investigate what means can be taken to deal with the problems that arise, whether by employment by municipalities or in any other cause. The subject is not a small one, and its importance will not be denied by anyone who has in his mind the all-important subject which the question of poor relief has raised in the past, and is likely to raise in the future."

Your Commissioners feel assured that those words will be cordially endorsed by all, of whatever political party, and they hope that as a result of the circulation of this Report something may be done to hasten these reforms in our Poor Law administration which are fitted to materially help the really deserving poor, prevent others from falling below the poverty line, and deepen the sense of responsibility in every true-hearted citizen, thus fulfilling the Royal Law—

"Bear ye one another's burdens."

II.—Labour Colonies.

RECOGNISING the valuable work which has already been accomplished by Labour Colonies at Midlocharwoods and elsewhere, and their direct relationship to Poor Law administration, your Commissioners took occasion to visit **Wilhelmsdorf**, the oldest of the 32 colonies now to be found in Germany.

WILHELMSDORF.

THIS colony, which was established in 1882, is situated seven miles from Bielefeld in the forest stretching southwards from the Teutoburger Wald.

The colony now extends to two thousand acres, and is for the most part reclaimed land. When the land was acquired there was only one road through the colony; now there are 4½ miles of public roads, 22 miles of private roads, and fifteen different buildings all constructed by the labour of the colonists. In Germany fruit trees are planted along the sides of the public roads (chaussée) by each province, and as indicating the return which can be had from what in this country is waste ground, it may be mentioned that in the State of Hanover the revenue from apple trees at the road sides is £7500. It is a notable fact that a German boy will walk miles past laden fruit trees without ever touching them. On the colony 500 acres have been brought into cultivation, 125 are laid out in plantations, while there are over 200 acres under pasture.

HOW TO ENTER THE COLONY.

ON arrival, an intending colonist has to give up his papers, including his travelling pass and prison discharge should he have been imprisoned (two out of three of the

persons admitted have been in prison). Should he not have the requisite papers, he must go to Bielefeld and report himself to the police, who give him temporary relief and set him to work for two days, after which he goes to the Bielefeld Relief Station, and, on obtaining his pass there, returns to the colony and is admitted. If, however, the police find that the man has been on the tramp and unemployed for, say three months, and has no money, he is liable to be sent to the **House of Correction**, *i.e.*, if it is wilful tramping, refusing to go to either the colony or the relief station.

METHOD OF TREATMENT.

THE papers being in order and handed over to the Director of the colony, the applicant is, without further questioning, provided with food and clean clothing, the latter being provided on credit on very reasonable terms, after which he is set to any available work, such as field work or ditching. During the following days the necessary enquiries are made through the police. If the colonist is a fugitive from justice, the police at once make application for his surrender; **but no matter how bad his previous record may be, he is not dismissed from the colony unless he misconducts himself there.**

As a rule the men do not come direct from prison, but only seek refuge in the colony after a period of tramping.

LIFE ON THE COLONY.

ON each day the colonist rises at 5 a.m. in summer, and from 6 to 6.30 a.m. in winter, according to the time the daylight breaks, thus reducing the use of lamps to a minimum. The first breakfast consists of a cup of coffee and small loaf. Second breakfast, black bread and coffee or milk. Dinner, soup with potatoes and vegetables. Some meat is provided once a day. Afternoon, coffee and bread. Supper, soup or herring, or cheese, bread and butter. Morning and evening services are conducted in the dining-hall by the House Father.

Most of the colonists are engaged in agricultural work—reclaiming the land by trenching. Others find employment as bricklayers, shoemakers, painters, etc.

WAGES.

FOR the first fourteen days the colonist receives his maintenance, but no wages. After the first fortnight the bulk of the colonists receive 3d. per day, as wages, during the period of the year when it is possible to work out of doors for a full day. From November till February the rate is reduced to 2½d. On leaving a bonus is given for good conduct.

The amount due as wages is not given to the colonist till he leaves, when he receives an order payable at Bielefeld. **In the majority of cases, however, the colonist leaves in debt,** *i.e.*, for the clothes received, which are paid for out of his earnings. There is a tendency for men to come to the colony for a short period that they may be supplied with clothes, after which they proceed once more on "the tramp."

If a colonist obtains a situation through the colony, the employer refunds out of the wages earned the debt due to the colony, but this only tends to induce the colonist in debt to wander on till he can find a situation for himself, thereby escaping his liabilities. It is obvious that the influence of this aspect of the system on the colonist is far from satisfactory.

MORAL INFLUENCES.

OVER and against this drawback must be placed the healthy moral influence exercised by the deacons and house-fathers, each of whom takes a personal interest in the men under his charge. Your Commissioners were impressed with the air of comfort and cleanliness which pervaded all the buildings, and the good behaviour of the colonists, all the more remarkable when account is taken of their previous history.

COST OF UPKEEP.

THE cost of upkeep of the colony for 1904-05 was £4735, including the erection of buildings. The income (including earnings and authorised provincial collections) amounted to £3775, leaving a deficit of £960. The deficit was not regarded

as serious, as experience had taught that institutions **without debt** very soon ceased to command that widespread interest which the Directors of the colony desire to see maintained, and if possible increased.

WHY THE COLONY IS IN DEBT.

SEVERAL reasons render it almost impossible to make such an institution self-supporting, such as—

(1) The state of debility in which most of the colonists arrive.

(2) The lack of experience of agricultural labour.

(3) The increase of the number of colonists when outdoor work is practically impossible.

(4) The inadequate staff when most help is required, as in spring, and at harvest.

SPECIAL CASES.

WILHELMSDORF not only provides a home for the ordinary out-of-work and a shelter for the tramp, but it has special provision for *insane epileptics and inebriates.* The insane epileptics were not put there because there happened to be a Labour Colony, but simply because there was room on the estate, and because of the vicinity of Bethel, which was overflowing. It is the opinion of the resident physician—Dr. Feldmann—to whom your Commissioners were specially indebted, that 25 per cent. of the insanity is directly traceable to inebriety. The inebriates are graded into four classes—(1) Those who are received free of charge, mostly old men. (2) Those of a slightly better class, who pay 6d. a day. (3) Men who, by paying a little more, have rather better accommodation—two or three occupying one room. (4) Gentlemen of the wealthy classes, who have each a comfortably furnished bedroom and share of dining and drawing rooms, with all the advantages of a refined home, for which they pay from £60 to £100 per annum. The last named are employed in gardening and the like, while in winter their time is occupied with music, painting, and other studies.

The Doctor was able to report many interesting cases now wholly delivered from the drink curse, while in the case of all incalculable good had been accomplished by providing for them a useful life free from those temptations which had hitherto proved too strong.

In Germany it is important to note it is possible to have an inebriate confined, by order of the magistrate, within such a colony if it can be satisfactorily proved that he is endangering the health and comfort of those dependent upon him. A similar provision would be eagerly hailed in this country.

LEAVING THE COLONY.

THE colonies never keep a man for more than one year eleven months, after which he is sent away, with permission to return. On leaving, a colonist receives a Wanderschein (tramp ticket) which is valid for only two or three months, after which it must be renewed ; not, however, without enquiry being made as to the cause of prolonged want of employment. **The inveterate out-of-work is thus detected, and is liable to be sent to a house of correction.**

The law that any person becomes **heimats-berechtigt** (entitled to claim a settlement, and consequent assistance if destitute (see p. 9), after staying two years in one place) does not strictly apply to the inmates of a labour colony, nevertheless the above precaution is taken so that not even a semblance to any right may be established. Every labour colony has a **black list**, and also copies of the black lists of all the other colonies. These lists contain the names of habitual tramps, who after leaving the colony in debt or through misconduct three times repeated, have forfeited the possibility of being received in any other colony, except the one where their behaviour led to their names being placed on the black list. Thus the tramp is compelled to return to the same colony, or the police will lay hands on him and send him to a house of correction, which is dreaded more than life on the colony. Experience has shown that this black list is a

powerful weapon in the hands of the house-father for securing order and obedience.

SITUATION OF COLONIES.

THE great majority of the German Labour Colonies are in country districts, while the largest in towns are at Hamburg, Berlin, and Madgeburg. As a rule the colonies are initiated by semi-private enterprise with grants from the province or county, which are usually continued, at least in part, to supplement freewill offerings. They command universal support, as they are acknowledged public organisations benefiting not only the unemployed but the county itself. Through the efforts of Pastor von Bodelschwingh a central committee, to which each local committee sends a representative, has now its headquarters in Berlin. Stated meetings are held to consider the welfare of the unemployed, and to compare the results of the various colonies. A monthly magazine—The Wanderer—publishes the reports and balance sheets, thus keeping the public in constant touch with this important branch of the country's work.

RELIEF STATIONS.

ALLIED to the colonies are the "Natural Verpflegungs" Stations (relief stations), which are to be found all over Germany. They are open to all in search of work, and relief *in kind* (this being the meaning of the word "Natural") is given for a certain amount of work done. That is to say, such work is never paid for in money, but by a night's lodging and a meal—generally supper and breakfast. At first originated to prevent house-to-house begging, they are rendered necessary by the German law which provides that every German subject in distress may at least claim one night's lodging and one day's food from the parish within whose boundaries he may happen to be on. When Miss Sutter first made these stations known in Britain (see *A Colony of Mercy*, chap. "Darkest Germany Tramping,"), there were some 2000 of them, costing in upkeep £75,000 per annum. They then formed a chain along the high roads within half-a-

day's walk of each other, the idea being that the forenoon would be for tramping (after leaving the night's lodging), and the afternoon for work at the next, or *vice versa*. But these stations have since diminished by nearly one-half. There are now about 1200—a most encouraging statement! *It shows that Germany's provisions for her labour seekers are gradually and surely diminishing her number of unemployed!* Twenty years ago German tramps were estimated at anything between one to two hundred thousand. They have been reduced to a tenth of this.

The tramp and the loafer, who with us sponge upon the general public, are not permitted to do so in Germany. If a man indicates a desire to tramp in search of work, the Labour Bureau informs him where work is most likely to be had, and after commencing his peregrinations he must keep rigorously on a definite line. If after three months of tramping a man fails to secure work, his government finds it for him, if not in the House of Correction, then certainly in one of the labour colonies, where he is kept till there is a reasonable prospect of self-maintenance. Of course there is always a certain percentage of incorrigibles who escape the narrow meshes of even this all-encircling net, but it is manifest that the life of a tramp in Germany is rendered so very uncomfortable with its continual alternation of road, prison, labour colony, that only the **absolute incorrigibles** find it preferable to steady employment.

HOMES FOR TRAVELLERS.

STILL better than the relief stations are the Herbergen zur Heimat — Journeymen's Homes — the first of which was established at Bonn in 1854. These homes are intended for the journeyman artizan as he journeys from town to town in search of employment. He pays at the rate of from 9d. to 1/- per day for board and lodgings. There is a characteristic difference between the relief stations and those homes, the former being a natural development of parish relief, while the latter partakes more of the character of a private home, over which a house-father or deacon presides. While primarily intended for men out of work, there are usually one or two

rooms set apart for the working men of the town—a kind of social institute or public-house minus the usual temptations. Those places have been found to exercise an influence of the highest kind.

THE TRIPLE ALLIANCE.

THOSE three—the Labour Colony, the Relief Station, and the Herberge—are Germany's provision for the unemployed, whereby (1) the class which is the despair of Poor Law Authorities is, for the most part, effectually dealt with; (2) the tramp is compelled to keep rigorously to a certain course; and (3) the decent and well-doing have every facility afforded.

GERMANY'S PENAL CODE.

SUCH provision is indispensable in a country whose Penal Code is as follows (Section 361):—**He shall be punished with imprisonment**—(1) Who, after he has been put under police supervision, breaks through the restrictions under which he has been placed; (2) who goes about as a tramp; (3) who begs or directs, or sends out children to beg, or fails to prevent persons from begging who are under his control and supervision and belong to his household; (4) who gives way to idleness, drink, or gambling, so that he falls into a state in which the help of the public has to be claimed through the intervention of the authorities for his maintenance, or the maintenance of those for whose support he is responsible; (5) who, if he requires relief from public poor funds, refuses, out of dislike of work, to perform a task suitable to his powers, which is assigned to him by the authorities; (6) who, after loss of the lodging which he has had up to the time, has not, in the interval permitted him by the proper authorities, procured for himself a lodging anywhere else and cannot show that, notwithstanding the trouble he has taken, he has been unable to do so.

RESULTS.

(1) It appears that of those who leave German colonies 60% are discharged at their own desire, professedly to go in search of work; 20% or thereby go direct to situations found for them by the colony; 10% are dismissed for bad behaviour.

(2) Of the accumulated wages paid to each man on leaving, the colony authorities admit that, in many instances, an improper use is made of the money.

(3) Many employers of labour are not disposed, if they can help it, to take colonists; hence colonists do their best to conceal the fact of their residence there.

(4) The colonies serve as suitable **receptacles for the idle, the drunken, and the depraved,** yet not forgetting the merely "unfortunate," and were nothing else done than to clear the streets of such, there is secured one of the indispensable conditions for effective Poor Law administration.

(5) They render great service to the decent unemployed in times of trade depression.

RECOMMENDATIONS.

A CONSIDERATION of all the facts lead your Commissioners to the conclusion that while making full allowance for the stringency of German Criminal Law, and the general air of militarism which pervades the Fatherland, there is urgent need for labour colonies in Scotland, provided the distinction between the unemployed and the unemployable is always maintained.

Colonies there should be for—

(1) The vagabond class, where there could be detention for a definite period. *This reform Mr. J. R. Motion has for years consistently advocated for this country, and your Commissioners have pleasure in adding their testimony to the wisdom and urgency of such a policy.*

(2) The mentally incapable—epileptics and feeble-minded.

(3) Morally incapable—inebriates.

(4) Those who are just falling into vicious habits.

(5) The genuine working man, temporarily out of employment.

(6) Those who desire to re-settle on the land, and ultimately to acquire holdings of their own.

Those six classes are so distinct that they cannot be mixed with advantage.

The (1) would clear our towns and cities of those who are at present a pest to society, and a menace to the public weal.

The (2) would provide a healthy open-air life for many who at present, while not requiring the close supervision of the asylum, are yet a danger to themselves and others.

The (3) would (if the necessary legislation were obtained) tend to diminish the wretchedness and misery of countless homes.

The (4) would rescue many from the awful abyss of crime.

The (5) would enable the honest deserving poor to successfully and with self-respect tide over the evil day.

The (6) would enable many who desire to leave the congested districts to settle on the land, where a training would equip them for acquiring a small holding.

In view of the grave problem arising from the continual inflow of the rural population to towns, it is worth while for the Government or Municipalities to consider to what extent employment might be given to suitable men to acquire a homestead of their own.

The formation of several small holdings associations in England has led to increased interest in this aspect of the subject, while the Report of the Scottish Commission on Agriculture to Denmark shows what results are possible when joint action is taken.

Then as a result of the work of these various classes of colonies much land presently yielding little or no return could be **reclaimed,** while the afforesting of other portions would supply employment for the temporarily out-of-work.

Thus labour colonies with such helpful influences as are available and with the necessary safeguards, are fitted, not only to aid in the effective administration of Poor Law relief, but also to contribute to the moral welfare of the community and to increase the material prosperity of the nation.

Opinions Expressed Regarding the Report.

Sir JOHN STIRLING-MAXWELL, Bart., M.P.

"The Report strikes me as a most interesting and business-like document. When the Royal Commission is appointed, a copy of the Report ought to be sent, and evidence offered."

Sir JOHN URE PRIMROSE, Bart., Ex-Lord Provost of Glasgow.

"The Deputation have discharged their mission admirably, and their views will prove most valuable."

Sir SAMUEL CHISHOLM, Bart., LL.D., Ex-Lord Provost of Glasgow.

"The Report of the Glasgow Deputation is the most lucid and intelligible account of the Elberfeld System I have seen. I should have liked an amplification of the paragraph, page 10, on 'Unsatisfactory Cases.'"

Professor SMART, LL.D., Member of the Royal Commission.

"I want you to send some copies to the Royal Commission. We are forming a Library there, and this Report of yours is the best short statement I have seen."

Mr. J. R. MOTION, Inspector of Poor, Glasgow.

"I have perused proof of the Report, in the terms of which I quite concur."

Dr. J. B. PATON, Nottingham.

"The Report is the most lucid and practical report I have ever read on the Elberfeld System and on Labour Colonies. By such a practicable scheme I trust Glasgow will set an example to other Scottish towns and cities, and will stimulate English towns as well."

Dr. JAMES PATON, Glasgow.

"Your Report is, to my mind, excellent."

Herr ADERS, President of the Elberfeld Verwaltung.

"Your Report of the Elberfeld System is correct."

Dr. FELDMANN, Wilhelmsdorf.

"I have read proof of your Report on the Labour Colony at Wilhelmsdorf, and, with the exception of two small details, which I have now adjusted, it is a correct account."

The AUTHOR of *Britain's Next Campaign.*

"I am delighted with your Report. It will do much to advance the Cause."

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